

before turning away
back into her pain
and her crying.

2.

I carry painkillers
up the slopes of Mt. Kinibalu
to dull
the edges of broken glass
inside my back
if they should grind together
if they should move and cut
afraid and wondering
at my foolishness.
I carry the memory
of a younger body
as I ascend
step by step
through laboured breathing
through protesting muscles
through head pain and nausea
past the rainforest
past the flowering orchids
the water-filled nepenthes
past the tree line
past my youth
breathing deeply
the thinning air.
I carry my love
for the woman walking ahead of me.
I carry the sky
on my shoulders
clouds and rain
the steepness unfolding
horizons stretching inside and out.
My legs are heavy
but I am light.
I carry joy
like a prancing child
hauling myself up the rock-face
hand over hand along the ropes
in the dark
at 3 a.m.
toward a dawn summit.

David Adès. 'A girl, her mother, and me'.
Transnational Literature Vol. 4 no. 1, November 2011.
<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

I carry the voices
of a girl and her mother
all the way
up the slopes of Mt. Kinibalu
and each time I falter
they hitch me to them and lift
and I climb
whispering
thank you
thank you.

David Adès